Bluffton Today

HAMPTON COUNTY GUARDIAN

Murdaugh bestowed Order of the Palmetto

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On Sept. 20, Randolph Murdaugh III joined the ranks of such South Carolina icons as the late novelist Pat Conroy, civil rights activist Septima Clark, Carolina football coach Lou Holtz, and singer James Brown. In front of scores of friends, family and coworkers on the Hampton County Courthouse lawn, Murdaugh received the Order of the Palmetto.

The Order of the Palmetto is the highest civilian honor awarded by the Governor of South Carolina. Established in 1971 and first awarded by Gov. John C. West, it recognizes a person's lifetime achievements and contributions to the State of South Carolina.

"I want to thank you all for coming here, and thank the Governor for this honor," Murdaugh said. "There may be people in South Carolina more deserving, but nobody is more appreciative than I am."

Murdaugh served as Solicitor of the 14th Judicial Circuit for 18 years, and together with his father and grandfather served in that office for 86 years. As solicitor, he tried more than 200 murder cases, once convicting two murderers in the same week.

"I am a fortunate man, there is no question about that," Murdaugh said, as he thanked his wife, family and peers, adding, "If I have had any success in my life it is because I had good help and support."

There were too many kind remarks and colorful stories shared during this event to report, but several officials made some key remarks.

“This is for your lifetime of service, and for what you and your family have done for the people of the Lowcountry,” said John E. Parker, a partner in the PMPED firm. “I am sure that Buster (Murdaugh’s grandfather and the founder of the firm) is looking down now, so proud of Randolph.”

“There is probably not a single person whose life has not been influenced by Randolph Murdaugh,” said the Hon. Perry Buckner, resident judge of the 14th Circuit since 2000 and an icon in his own right. “He has contributed the majority of his life to serving the people of Hampton County.”

“When law enforcement needed him, he was always there, working to make Hampton County and the 14th Circuit a safer place to live,” said Hampton County Sheriff T.C. Smalls.

A lifetime of service

Randolph Murdaugh, III, was born on Oct. 25, 2939, the son of Gladys and Randolph “Buster” Murdaugh, Jr. and grandson of Randolph Murdaugh, Sr. From a very early age, Randolph would accompany his father to work and grew to love the courts.

He attended public schools in Hampton County and graduated from Wade Hampton High School in 1957. In 1961, he married Elizabeth “Libby” Murdaugh from Brunson and graduated the same year from the University of South Carolina. In January of 1964, he graduated from University of South Carolina Law School and the couple returned to Varnville, where he began the practice of law with his father in the family firm, Murdaugh, Eltzroth & Peters, and also began serving as Assistant Solicitor of the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit.

Mr. and Mrs. Murdaugh have four children: Lynn Goettee (Allen), Randolph Murdaugh, IV (Christy), Richard Alexander Murdaugh (Maggie), and John Marvin

Murdaugh (Liz). They have ten grandchildren, the youngest one carries the name of Randolph Murdaugh, V. Randolph and Libby are members of the Varnville United Methodist Church.

In 1987, having been appointed to fill the vacancy of his retiring father, Randolph became the third generation Murdaugh to hold the office of solicitor. He was re-elected without opposition for five terms, which represents 86 years of service from the Murdaugh family to the citizens of the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit. Solicitor Murdaugh was also elected President of the South Carolina Solicitors Association and served in that capacity from 1995-1996.

On Dec. 31, 2005, Randolph retired as Solicitor and also returned to his old law firm to practice with two of his sons. He continues the firm's tradition started by his grandfather in 1910 of representing individuals and small businesses in their legal needs.